

Resume Tips

1. What IS a resume anyway?

Remember, a resume is a self-promotional document that presents you in the best possible light, for the purpose of getting invited to a job interview. It's *not* an official personnel document. It's not a job application. It's not a "career obituary"! And it is not a confessional.

2. What should the resume content be about?

It is not just about past jobs! It is about YOU, and how you performed and what you accomplished in past jobs--especially those accomplishments that are most relevant to the work you want to do next. A good resume predicts how you might perform in that desired future job.

3. What is the fastest way to improve a resume?

Remove everything that starts with "responsibilities included" and replace it with on-the-job accomplishments. (See Tip 11 for one way to write them.)

4. What is the most common resume mistake made by job hunters?

Leaving out their Job Objective! If you do not show a sense of direction, employers will not be interested. Having a clearly stated goal does not have to confine you if it is stated well.

5. What is the first step in writing a resume?

Decide on a job target (or "job objective") that can be stated in about 5 or 6 words. Anything beyond that is probably "fluff" and indicates a lack of clarity and direction.

6. How do you decide whether to use a Chronological resume or a Functional one?

The Chronological format is widely preferred by employers, and works well if you are staying in the same field (especially if you have been upwardly-mobile). Only use a Functional format if you are changing fields, and you are sure a skills-oriented format would show off your transferable skills to better advantage; and **be sure** to include a clear chronological work history!

7. What if you do not have any experience in the kind of work you want to do?

Get some! Find a place that will let you do some volunteer work right away. You only need a brief, concentrated period of volunteer training (for example, 1 day a week for a month) to have at least SOME experience to put on your resume.

Also, look at some of the volunteer work you have done in the past and see if any of THAT helps document some skills you'll need for your new job.

8. What do you do if you have gaps in your work experience?

You could start by looking at it differently.

General Rule: Tell what you WERE doing, as gracefully as possible--rather than leave a gap. If you were doing anything valuable (even if unpaid) during those so-called "gaps" you could just insert THAT into the work-history section of your resume to fill the hole. Here are some examples:

- Participated in Study Abroad program
- Community service

9. What if you have several different job objectives you are working on at the same time? Or you have not narrowed it down yet to just one job target?

Then write a different resume for each different job target. A targeted resume is MUCH, much stronger than a generic resume.

10. What if you have a fragmented, scrambled-up work history, with lots of short-term jobs?

To minimize the job-hopper image, combine several similar jobs into one "chunk," for example:

- 20XX-XX **Technician**; ABC University, Engineering Department -- or
- 20XX-XX **Math Tutor**; ABC University, Student Services.

Also you can just drop some of the less important, briefest jobs.

But do not drop a job, even when it lasted a short time, if that was where you acquired your important skills or experience.

11. What is the best way to impress an employer?

Fill your resume with "PAR" statements. PAR stands for Problem-Action-Results; in other words, first you state the problem that existed in your workplace, then you describe what you did about it, and finally you point out the beneficial results.

Here is an example: "Transformed a disorganized, inefficient warehouse into a smooth-running operation by totally redesigning the layout; this saved the company thousands of dollars in recovered stock."

Another example: "Improved an engineering company's obsolete filing system by developing a simple but sophisticated functional-coding system. This saved time and money by recovering valuable, previously lost project records."

16. How can a student list summer jobs?

Students can make their resume look neater by listing seasonal jobs very simply, such as "Spring 20XX" or "Summer 20XX" rather than 6/XX to 9/XX.

17. What if you do not quite have your degree or credentials yet?

You can say something like:

- Bachelor's Degree anticipated December 20XX

20. What about revealing race or religion?

Do not include ethnic or religious affiliations (inviting pre-interview discrimination) UNLESS you can see that including them will support your job objective. Get an opinion from a respected friend or colleague about when to reveal, and when to conceal, your affiliations.

23. What about fancy-schmancy paper?

The use of plain white or ivory paper is appropriate for your resume.

24. Should you fold your resume?

Do not fold a laser-printed resume right along a line of text. The "ink" could flake off along the fold.